



# National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Safety Recommendation

*Log H-538*

Date: May 25, 1989

In reply refer to: H-89-1

To the Governors of the  
50 States and the  
Mayor of the District of Columbia

About 10:55 p.m. eastern daylight time on May 14, 1988, a pickup truck traveling northbound in the southbound lanes of Interstate 71 struck head-on a church activity bus traveling southbound in the left lane of the highway near Carrollton, Kentucky. As the pickup truck rotated during impact, it struck a passenger car traveling southbound in the right lane near the church bus. The church bus fuel tank was punctured during the collision sequence, and a fire ensued, engulfing the entire bus. The busdriver and 26 bus passengers were fatally injured. Thirty-four bus passengers sustained minor to critical injuries, and six bus passengers were not injured. The pickup truck driver sustained serious injuries, but neither occupant of the passenger car was injured.<sup>1</sup>

The accident bus was a prestandard school bus, that is, it was manufactured before a series of special Federal motor vehicle safety standards (FMVSS) became effective which mandated a higher level of safety for school buses compared to other buses. Before April 1, 1977, school buses were required only to meet the minimum standards required of all multipurpose passenger vehicles. The Safety Board believes that the safety record for prestandard buses is relatively good. Because, in part, of the large size and mass of school buses relative to passenger cars, station wagons, and vans often used to transport children to school, prestandard buses provide safer transportation for school children than these other types of passenger vehicles. However, as a result of its investigation experience involving prestandard and poststandard school buses, the Safety Board believes that the improved protection (which the FMVSS relating to school buses requires) is responsible for saving lives and preventing many more serious injuries. Therefore, the Board believes that States should propose legislation establishing a date by which school buses manufactured before April 1977 will be phased out of use for public transportation purposes.

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<sup>1</sup>For more detailed information, read Highway Accident Report--"Pickup Truck/Church Activity Bus Head-on Collision and Fire near Carrollton, Kentucky, May 14, 1988" (NTSB-HAR-89/01)

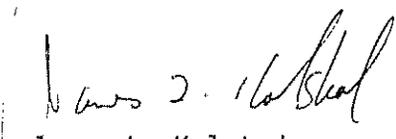
Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the governors of the 50 States:

Propose legislation establishing a date by which school buses manufactured before April 1977 will be phased out of use for transportation of passengers. (Class II, Priority Action) (H-89-1)

Also, the Safety Board issued Safety Recommendations H-89-2 to the 49 States, except Kentucky, and the District of Columbia; H-89-3 to various church associations and other special activity groups; H-89-4 through -6 to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; H-89-7 to the Federal Highway Administration; and H-89-8 through -14 to the State of Kentucky.

The National Transportation Safety Board is an independent Federal agency with the statutory responsibility ". . . to promote transportation safety by conducting independent accident investigations and by formulating safety improvement recommendations" (Public Law 93-633). The Safety Board is vitally interested in any actions taken as a result of its safety recommendations and would appreciate a response from you regarding action taken or contemplated with respect to the recommendation in this letter. Please refer to Safety Recommendation H-89-1 in your reply.

KOLSTAD, Acting Chairman, and BURNETT, LAUBER, NALL, and DICKINSON, Members, concurred in this recommendation.

  
By: James L. Kolstad  
Acting Chairman

DISTRIBUTION LIST SAFETY RECOMMENDATION H-89-1

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